

A LITTLE BISMUTH.

A Story of Artist Life in Munich.

BY ROBERT C. V. MEYERS.

AUTHOR OF "PAUL'S BACKBONE," "JOHN MARSHALL'S SISTER," ETC.

An artist's profession in Munich has caused a suspension of business for the day. Toward dusk an elderly appearing woman, black-cloaked and veiled, enters a drug shop in a street a little removed from the business portion of the town.

The clerks of the establishment are among the thousands viewing the pageant, then passing a few streets away. When the heels of the woman's boots rattle upon the marble flooring the proprietor of the shop comes forward from the back of the long room, where he has been brooding under the single gas jet lighted in the place. He is a young man, white of face and wild of eye, looking as though he were undergoing a severe mental strain.

"What is your wish?" he asks in a voice that has an English ring in it.

The woman was fumbling at her pocket as though in search of her purse.

"I should like a small quantity of bismuth," she answered, when he had addressed her a second time.

The druggist picked up a horn spatula, went to the back of the shop, returned with the spatula filled with a white powder, put some of it in the silver scale upon the polished counter, weighed it in a bit of fine paper and handed it to his customer.

She did not immediately take it from his hand, which caused him to look at her and note her appearance; thus he was able to describe her appearance to the police a little later on. He also noted that the eyes back of the veil were fixed upon him. This, in his then frame of mind, irritated him.

"Here is your bismuth," he said almost harshly.

Then she caught up the little package, tossed down a piece of money and hurriedly to the door. The knob in her hand, she passed, "Is there anything else?" he asked.

She opened the door and was gone. A band in the procession was playing the liveliest of tunes, wags of the melody entering the shop.

The druggist groaned, and picking up the spatula went to put in the drawer from which he had taken it the powder left over from the quantity he had weighed out for the woman. When he came to the place he started back with an exclamation. He had neglected the shop for several days, and during his absence a clerk had taken the bismuth from the drawer where it had always been kept and substituted for it a newly discovered drug, one of the deadliest and most subtle poisons in the pharmacopoeia. He had properly marked the drawer with the name of the poison, but the druggist had automatically gone to the usual receptacle of the bismuth and had not noticed the change. He had given the unknown woman enough of the poison to kill her.

He flew to the door. The woman was no where to be seen. He ran to the corner and looked up and down in the gathering gloom, but no one was in sight. He retraced his steps to the shop and found on the threshold the label marked "Bismuth," which he had placed upon the woman's package, and which she must have torn off as she hastily put the package in her pocket. This label bore his name; his first sensation was almost of relief—the mistake might not now be traced to him if the poor creature swallowed the drug he had given her.

Where was the happiness of life—here was an elderly, bowed woman whose morning weeds bespoke address and loss; might he not have placed within her hand relief from care and memory? Then he revolved from this morbid reasoning, and the enormity of his responsibility flashed across him. He went to the parlor back of the shop. Here he found his mother reading a stern, old woman, in whose eyes was a power of will unopposed by her son.

"Let me tell you what I have done," he said in English.

She slowly closed her book.

"What do you mean?" she asked leisurely, as though she expected some extravagant story of an escapade. He told her what had occurred. Her brow contracted.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

"I blame you," she said.

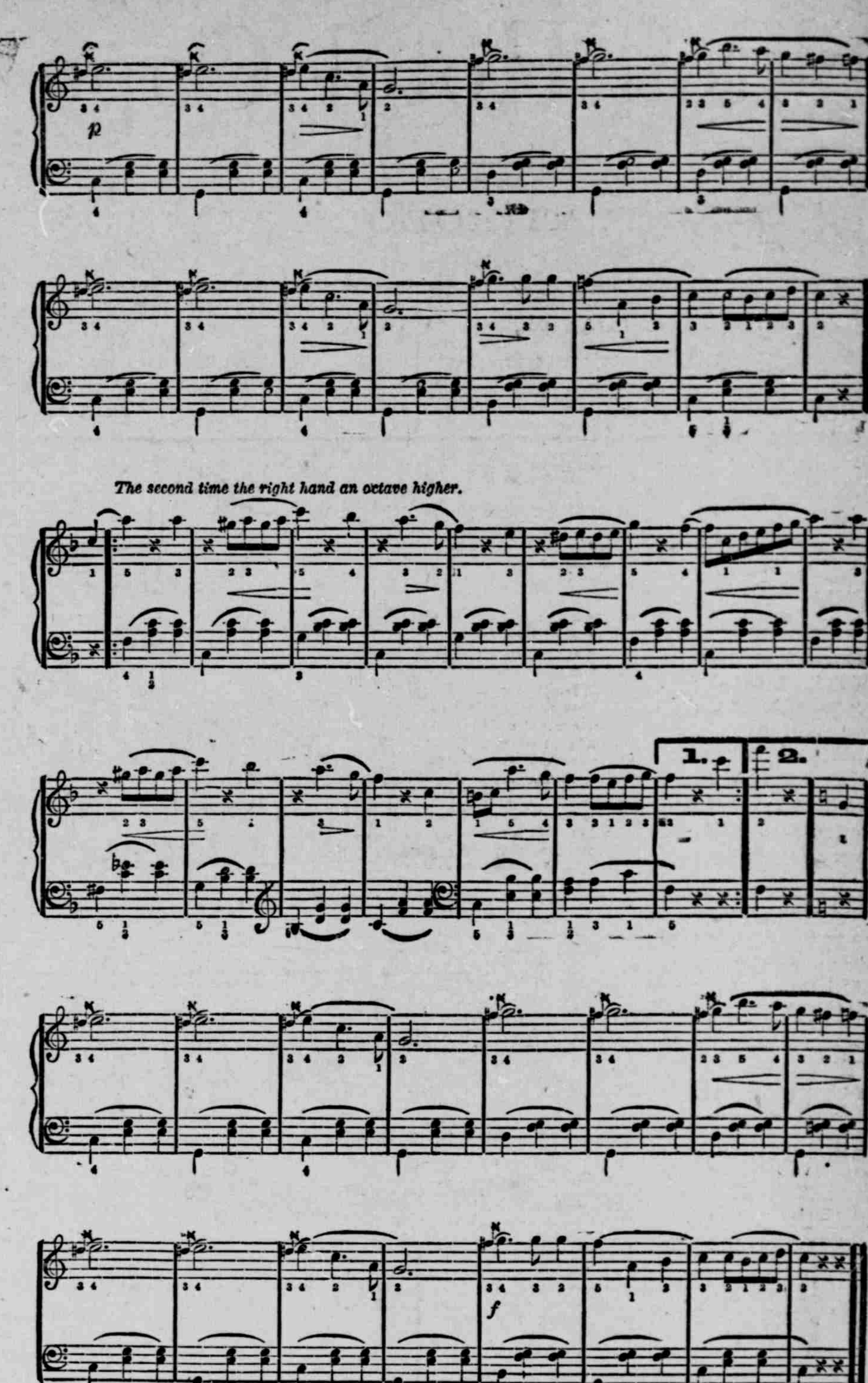
RIK WATZ.

CARL SIDUS, Op. 63.

Lively, 2. - 80.



Copyright-Kunkel Bros., 1890.



his own weakness and her strength. She had

always covered him with her love for him un-

til she had destroyed in him the will to oppose

her.

And now the strongest feeling of his life

swayed him—his love for Lilli. He knew the

woman who had been his life, and he knew

her delicate sensitiveness which contrasted

with the world had not blunted. It was this

delicate sensitiveness which made her the

chivalric spirit of gentlemen, which often made

her impersonations on the stage too refined for

the general taste.

His mother's last blow was the hardest—Lilli

would blame him for an instant's delay in the

adjustment of the terrible mistake he had made;

she would blame herself for it! No, he must

not go to her until he had done what he could

to find the woman he had waited on in the

shop.

With a look of dreary reproach for his mother

he left the parlor. Here he heard him go out

into the street. Mrs. Clark went into the shop.

Upon the woman's face he found the label, "Bis-

muth," which her son had picked from the floor

where the woman had stood. Her hand closed

over it as if through his infatuation for the ac-

tress she had played with him she played with

so many others, he should endeavor to

cover up his mistake and, perhaps, win Lilli

back into his arms. He had been told that the

woman of whose family had been taken from

the world could find him guilty of positive

crime. Better incarceration for a while, than a

woman who would never love him again. He

went to the police station and gave his name

and address. He was taken to a cell and

left there until morning. He was then

brought before a magistrate and

sent to the prison for a month. He was

then brought before a jury and

sent to the prison for a year. He was

then brought before a jury and

sent to the prison for a year. He was

then brought before a jury and

sent to the prison for a year. He was

then brought before a jury and

sent to the prison for a year. He was

then brought before a jury and

sent to the prison for a year. He was

then brought before a jury and

sent to the prison for a year. He was

then brought before a jury and

sent to the prison for a year. He was

then brought before a jury and

sent to the prison for a year. He was

then brought before a jury and

sent to the prison for a year. He was

then brought before a jury and

sent to the prison for a year. He was

then brought before a jury and

sent to the prison for a year. He was

then brought before a jury and

evening came, and the elderly woman in the

black cloak remained undiscovered.

The Fraulein Lilli naturally heard of the

commotion. Her maid spoke much of it when

she carried the chocolate to her bedside in the

morning.

Greta thought that her mistress looked poorly

these two or three days, and that her acting last

night showed a perceptible falling off. So with

the chocolate she carried fresh news of the

strange excitement in the city and hoped that it

might provoke a smile. Instead, the Fraulein

asked her to be silent and to read the items in

the morning paper.

She was silent all the way home. "She sought

her room at once, and bade Greta to leave her

alone. She sat before her mirror and regarded

the reflection of her face. It was a beautiful

face, a pure woman's face, and that other

woman had as much as said she was not

fit to be the wife of her son.

The man she loved did not care for her, and

she had promised another man to be his wife!

What had her life done for her when it all ended

in this dismal failure? She had befriended

many, the poor, the blind, the lame, the

suffering, the woman with pining intellect; and

yet she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

beauty as the green cloth rolled down at the

end of the performance.

When she was called before the curtain, over

her gorgeous gown she had slipped on a long

black cloak. For she had tried to escape from

the theater without responding to the call.

As she smilingly bowed her acknowledgments

of the plaudits, a boy, referring to her cloak,

separately murmured, "Bismuth" and the

people roared. She hastened from the stage,

brushed past admirers who waited to give her

last greeting, and reached her carriage with

Greta in it.

She was silent all the way home. "She sought

her room at once, and bade Greta to leave her

alone. She sat before her mirror and regarded

the reflection of her face. It was a beautiful

face, a pure woman's face, and that other

woman had as much as said she was not

fit to be the wife of her son.

The man she loved did not care for her, and

she had promised another man to be his wife!

What had her life done for her when it all ended

in this dismal failure? She had befriended

many, the poor, the blind, the lame, the

suffering, the woman with pining intellect; and

yet she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

mistaken her own heart for the heart of a

man, and she had been so deceived! She had

for him. It had all been simulation, art, then.

He took the letter to his mother. "Forgive

me," he said. "You will understand when you

have read this."

She could say not a word; she could only carry

the letter into the privacy of her own room and

have her agony beyond the sight of humanity.

Clark was well nigh crazed that day; he was

jeered at for the excitement he had raised in the

city, and people were doubtful if there had been

an elderly woman who wanted a small quantity

of bismuth, and who, instead, received a deadly

poison. He got through the day, busy with the

authorities and the crowd around his shop.

And all the day there was but one absorbing

thought—Lilli. When night came he thought

of her in the theater, her last appearance as a

trumpet. When it was time for the perform-

ance to be over he left the house. False as

she might be, he loved her—he must look upon

her just once more before she left him forever.

The theater was dark when he got there;

he could not see her go to her carriage sur-

rounded by the youth of Munich.

Then a voice called him; he would go to her

house, upbraid her for all her falsity to him.

He rose along to the street in which was her

broom, and the door of the house was

open. Greta was coming down the

steps.

"Herr Clark," she cried, "I was about to post

this letter for you. Will you be so kind as to

take it to her? She will be waiting for it."

A letter! He snatched it from the girl, tore

it open and read it in the light from the hall.

Lilli had not written why she had come to his

shop, but she had written that she loved him

and that she was his wife. He read and read